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Title:
Speech at the opening of the Steel Convention

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SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE STEEL CONVENTION BY THE PREMIER OF
SOUTH AUSTRALIA, DON DUNSTAN.

4/10/71.

MR. DOWNIE,

MR. McKEW,

MR. JOHNSON,

(LADIES AND) GENTLEMEN:

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME HERE THIS MORNING TO OPEN THE 19TH
STEEL CONVENTION.

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT, I WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME THOSE OF YOU
WHO ARE VISITORS FROM OTHER STATES AND FROM NEW ZEALAND; I TRUST
THAT YOU FIND OUR STATE CONGENIAL AND HOSPITABLE, AND THAT YOUR
CONVENTION IS A SUCCESS.

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IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT YOUR CONVENTION IS THIS YEAR HELD IN SOUTH
AUSTRALIA FOR SEVERAL REASONS, NOT THE LEAST AMONG WHICH IS THAT
AT WHYALLA, IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S INDUSTRIAL NORTH, WE, AS A STATE,
PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN THE AUSTRALIAN STEEL AND IRON INDUSTRY,
BEING ITS MAJOR IRON AND STEEL PRODUCER AND EXPORTER. FURTHER,
WHYALLA AND THE MIDDLE BACK RANGES, SOME WAY OUT OF THAT CITY,
HAVE BEEN PRE-EMINENT IN YOUR INDUSTRY FOR MANY YEARS NOW -
IN FACT, SOUTH AUSTRALIA IS FUNDAMENTAL TO ITS HEALTH, AND
THIS IS A POSITION WHICH IS NOT LIKELY TO DIMINISH FOR VERY MANY
YEARS, NOTWITHSTANDING THE DRAMATIC ORE DISCOVERIES IN
WESTERN AUSTRALIA. OF COURSE, IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, WE WOULD
NOT BE IN SUCH A POSITION IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE STRENGTH
AND IMPORTANCE OF B.H.P.

UNTIL A SHORT TIME AGO, AS A RESULT OF A NUMBER OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS, WHYALLA WAS CALLED A 'COMPANY TOWN', WHICH IS AN UNUSUAL EPITHET FOR AN AUSTRALIA WHOSE MAJOR INDUSTRIES, BY AND LARGE, ARE ESTABLISHED IN OUR CAPITAL CITIES. IN NORTH AMERICA, FOR INSTANCE, SUCH A SITUATION WOULD NOT BE UNUSUAL. THERE, ON BOTH SEABORADS AND IN THE MID-WEST, IT IS POSSIBLE TO FIND THOUSANDS OF CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES DEPENDENT ON THE WORK OFFERED BY SINGLE FIRMS OR CONSORTIA. AS A RESULT, SUCH CITIES AND TOWNS HAVE DEVELOPED A VERY SPECIAL IDENTIFICATION WITH THEIR DOMINATING INDUSTRIES, TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT WHAT SOME SOCIOLOGISTS HAVE CALLED THE 'COMPANY TOWN MENTALITY' HAS BECOME WIDELY EVIDENT. WHICH IS TO SAY, THAT THE CITIZENS OF SUCH TOWNS HAVE FELT THAT THEY NEEDED TO DO NOTHING TO HELP THEMSELVES, WHETHER AT THE DOMESTIC OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL, BECAUSE 'THE COMPANY' WOULD DO IT FOR THEM IF THINGS GOT TOO ROUGH.

WE HAVE, I THINK, ESCAPED THAT SITUATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AND WITH WHYALLA. AND ONE OF THE REASONS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO SO IS THAT THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS FOR SOME YEARS BEEN INTENT ON ENCOURAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW INDUSTRIES IN THE STATE'S INDUSTRIAL NORTH. EVEN NOW WE DO NOT HAVE A SUFFICIENT RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE THREE-CITY AREA - THAT IS INCLUDING PORT AUGUSTA AND PORT PIRIE - TO PROVIDE THAT MEASURE OF REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT STABILITY AND SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL DIVERSIFICATION WHICH IS NECESSARY FOR A TRULY INTEGRATED AND SETTLED COMMUNITY. BUT WE ARE CLOSER TO IT THAN MANY COMPARABLE INDUSTRIAL REGIONS IN THE EASTERN STATES, AND I BELIEVE THAT WITH INCREASINGLY EFFICIENT RAIL TRANSPORT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INDUSTRIES REQUIRING FEMALE LABOUR, THE IDEAL POSITION WILL BE ACHIEVED.

WHICH BRINGS ME TO A POINT I HAVE ARRIVED AT SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS SPEAKING TO VARIOUS INDUSTRIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE GROUPS. AND THAT IS, NO MATTER HOW WELL GOVERNMENTS ENDEAVOUR TO PLAN THE FUTURE COURSE OF THEIR COUNTRIES OR STATES, NOR HOW DYNAMICALLY INDUSTRIES PROJECT AND DETERMINE THEIR FUTURE STRATEGIES, NOR HOW CAREFULLY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS EXAMINE WAYS IN WHICH THEY CAN COPE WITH THE RAPID INCREASE IN AREAS REQUIRING TECHNOLOGICAL SPECIALISATION, OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SYSTEM WILL NOT SURVIVE UNLESS THE PRIME-MOVERS IN SOCIETY - POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL - ARE PREPARED TO SOLVE THE SUBSIDIARY PROBLEMS THEIR ACTIONS CAUSE.

FOR INSTANCE, POLITICIANS MAY DECIDE THAT FOR A GREAT NUMBER OF EXCELLENT STATE AND TOWN PLANNING REASONS THAT A NEW REGIONAL CITY IS DESIRABLE AND THEREFORE SEEK TO GAIN THE INDUSTRIES NECESSARY TO SUPPORT ITS PROJECTED POPULATION. BUT AS SOON AS IT DOES SO IT MUST THEN SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF CITY WASTE THAT THE NEW CITY WILL CAUSE, AND MUST PAY ATTENTION TO THE KINDS OF INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION THE INDUSTRIES WILL BRING.

IN A SENSE, NO ONE SET OF AUTHORITIES IS ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE - GOVERNMENTS ARE ELECTED BY PEOPLE WHO WANT JOBS TO PROVIDE THEM WITH THE POWER TO BUY THE THINGS INDUSTRIES MAKE; INDUSTRIES IN TURN ARE DEPENDENT ON THE BUYERS OF THEIR PRODUCTS. IT IS A CIRCULAR EQUATION, WITH GOVERNMENTS SITTING IN THE MIDDLE AND REQUIRED TO PLACATE ALL THE DISSIDENT ELEMENTS.

BUT AS I SAID BEFORE, ALL THE PRIME-MOVERS IN A SOCIETY ARE RESPONSIBLE, AND ARE THUS LIABLE FOR CHARGE. AND I BELIEVE THAT MANY INDUSTRIES ARE BEGINNING TO SEE THIS NOW. IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, IT IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF A MAJOR INDUSTRY COMING INTO AN AREA, STOKING UP, AND PRODUCING WITH NO REGARD TO HOW ITS WORKERS ARE LIVING, HOW ITS ACTIVITIES ARE AFFECTING THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT, OR HOW ITS PRODUCTS WILL AFFECT, SAY, A NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE FUTURE. SUCH MATTERS CERTAINLY AFFECT THE CITY IN WHICH IT IS ESTABLISHED, AND BY EXTENSION THE STATE AND THE NATION.

IF COMPANIES DO NOT TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EFFECT OF BOTH OPERATIONS AND THEIR PRODUCTS, POLITICAL PRESSURE WILL CERTAINLY MAKE GOVERNMENTS DO SO. IN FACT, IT IS POSSIBLE TO SEE THIS PROCESS OPERATING NOW. IF I MAY VENTURE TO PREDICT THE FUTURE, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT WITHIN SOME TEN SHORT YEARS BOTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS AND OUR MAJOR INDUSTRIES WILL BE FACED WITH EVER INCREASING COSTS AND A RAPIDLY EXPANDING BASE CAPITAL REQUIREMENT BECAUSE THE NATION AS A WHOLE WILL BE DEMANDING INCREASINGLY CLEANER INDUSTRIES, AND BENIGN PRODUCTS.

IN CLOSING MAY I SAY THAT IT IS SELF-EVIDENT TO ANY INDUSTRIALIST, POLITICIAN OR ECONOMIST THAT QUALITY STEEL PRODUCTION IS A BASIC REQUIREMENT TO ANY ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL NATION. IN AUSTRALIA WE ARE IN AN UNUSUAL POSITION FOR AN INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY, IN HAVING ONLY ONE PRODUCER OF STEEL.

BUT DESPITE WHAT HAS BEEN SAID OVER THE YEARS BY PEOPLE OF A GREAT MANY POLITICAL COLOURS REGARDING THE B.H.P. AND THE RAMIFICATIONS OF ITS DOMINANT POSITION, THE FACT THAT THE COMPANY HAS RETAINED A UNIFORM PRICE FOR STEEL IN ALL OUR CAPITALS HAS MEANT A GREAT DEAL TO AUSTRALIA. FOR INSTANCE, WITHOUT SUCH A POLICY, NEWCASTLE OR PORT KEMBLA MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP THEIR SECONDARY INDUSTRIES. WE MAY HAVE HAD TO BEAR THE KIND OF SITUATION THAT OBTAINS IN COUNTRIES WHERE SUCH RESPONSIBILITY WAS LACKING, AND NOW BE FACED WITH AN INDUSTRIAL CONGLOMERATE LIKE THE RUHR IN GERMANY OR THAT OF THE EAST COAST OF THE MAIN JAPANESE ISLAND WHERE THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM UNPLANNED INDUSTRIALISATION ARE MORE THAN PERHAPS ANY GOVERNMENT CAN SOLVE SHORT OF MASSIVE ECONOMIC DISLOCATION.

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IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA WE ARE FORTUNATE IN BEING ABLE TO LEARN FROM THE PLANNING MISTAKES OF OTHER NATIONS, AND, INDEED, AREAS IN AUSTRALIA. IN OUR CURRENT INDUSTRIALISATION PLANS THE FACTORS OF WHICH I HAVE BEEN SPEAKING TODAY ARE TO SOME CONSIDERABLE DEGREE UNDER EXAMINATION AND/OR CONTROL. I THINK THAT IT WOULD BE VERY UNLIKELY THAT ADELAIDE'S SMOG PROBLEM EVER REACHED THE INTENSITY OF, SAY, SYDNEY'S, LET ALONE TOKYO'S. IN FACT WE STILL HAVE AN ENORMOUS CAPACITY FOR HEAVY INDUSTRY IN BOTH THE INDUSTRIAL NORTH AND IN ADELAIDE, AND IF YOU WOULD EXCUSE MY PUTTING IN A SOMEWHAT BLATANT 'PLUG' FOR MY STATE, MIGHT I JUST SAY THAT WE HAVE AN ACTUAL AND PROFITABLE CAPACITY FOR PRODUCERS OF SHEET STEEL TO SERVE OUR AUTOMOTIVE AND DOMESTIC APPLIANCE INDUSTRIES. ANY TAKERS, PLEASE SEE MAX SCRIVEN OF OUR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BRANCH.

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(LADIES AND) GENTLEMEN, YOUR INSTITUTE HAS A VITALLY IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF A KEY SECTOR OF AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY. I NOTE THAT IN YOUR CONSTITUTION ONE OF YOUR AIMS IS, AND I QUOTE "THE MAINTENANCE OF SOUND AND EQUITABLE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE INDUSTRY AND ITS EMPLOYEES, ITS CUSTOMERS, THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND THE GOVERNMENT". THEY ARE WORTHY AND NECESSARY OBJECTS, AND I BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE CERTAINLY IN THE PROCESS OF BEING ACHIEVED. I THEREFORE HAVE GREAT PLEASURE IN DECLARING YOUR CONVENTION OPEN.